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Cardiff University – 16th June 2021



Spice and Other Street Drugs – A Manchester-led Solution to a UK problem



PC Andy Costello

Greater Manchester Police

email. andrew.costello@gmp.police.uk



Dr. Oliver Sutcliffe

Director of MANDRAKE, Manchester Met. Uni.

email. o.sutcliffe@mmu.ac.uk; twitter: [sutcliffeob](https://twitter.com/sutcliffeob)



Our Journey Begins...

Frozen Spice: Synthetic drug 'turning addicts into Walking Dead'

Sky News meets people hooked on a synthetic drug that is seen as more addictive than heroin and leaves users "almost catatonic".

Sunday 12



THIS IS NOT A MANCHESTER-CENTRIC ISSUE

Police deal with 58 Spice-related incidents in city centre in just three days

A senior GMP officer says the Spice epidemic in Manchester city centre is putting emergency services under immense pressure

Haunting video shows Spice turning men into shaking zombies in the Northern Quarter

Charity workers have said the drug is turning clusters of people into the 'walking dead'





Our Perspective – Pre-Psychoactive Substances Act



Head Shops

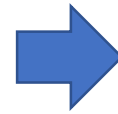


OPERATION RAMSEY
(with Trading Standards)

- Greater Manchester Police (GMP) began to experience issues with NPS in Northern Quarter.
- Proliferation of Head Shops and other retailers. Variety of clientele.
- Increase in ASB incidents - a single street experienced a rise in ASB of 1,500% in 3 year period.
- ***“Spice Tourists”*** – Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonists (SCRA) users as young as 12yrs.



Our Perspective – Post-Psychoactive Substances Act



- Head Shops close. Initial drought of NPS on the street. ***“Spice Tourists”*** disappeared.
- Establishment of street supply. **Where are they getting them from?**
- Uncertainty from Police Officers as to identification & powers.
- Individuals showing signs of withdrawal akin to Class A drugs. **SCRA prevalence becomes varied and unpredictable.** **Incidents of violence and collapses increase.**



Targeting Street Supply

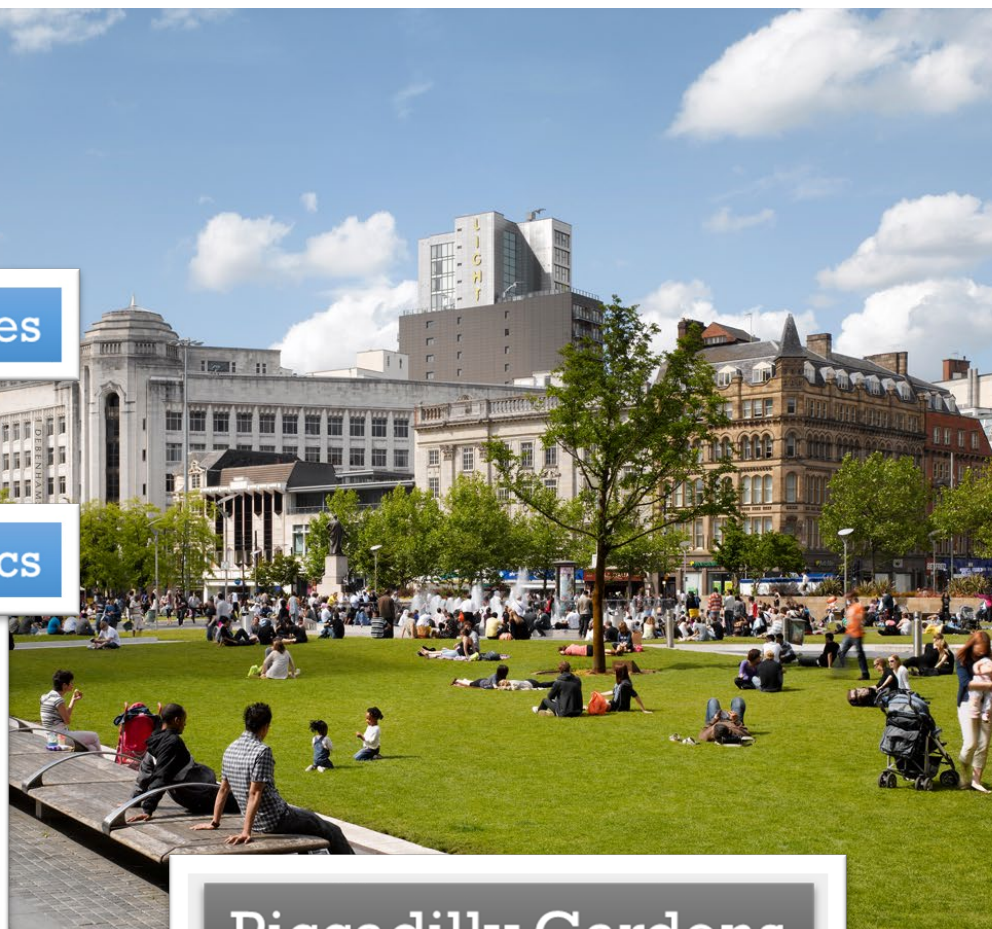
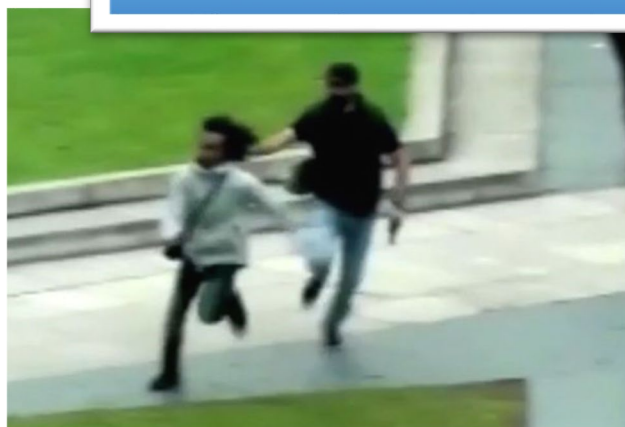


Drug Seizures



OPERATION MANDERA

Covert and Overt Tactics



Piccadilly Gardens



**WE'RE
WATCHING
YOU!**
**10,000 CCTV
cameras in
Greater
Manchester**



Operational Successes



Warrant executed led to seizure of SCRA with potential street value of several million pounds.



OPERATION MANDERA

Spice dealers receive custodial sentences totaling 50 years.



Engagement and Knowledge Exchange



- Initial engagement period to outline offences under Misuse of Drugs Act.
- Establishment of on street outreach with Drugs Workers.
- Creation and utilisation of non-custodial outcomes for **possession** offences.
- Increased information sharing with service providers.
- Training for staff around assisting and care for users.





MANchester DRug Analysis & Knowledge Exchange



OPERATIONS

FORENSIC SCIENCE UNIT
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



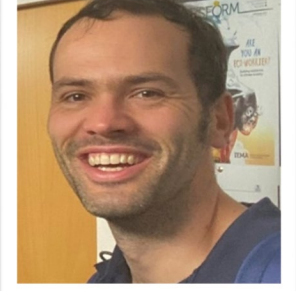
Andy Costello
GMP

GMCA GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

**GM DRUGS EARLY
WARNING SYSTEM**



Oliver Sutcliffe
Director



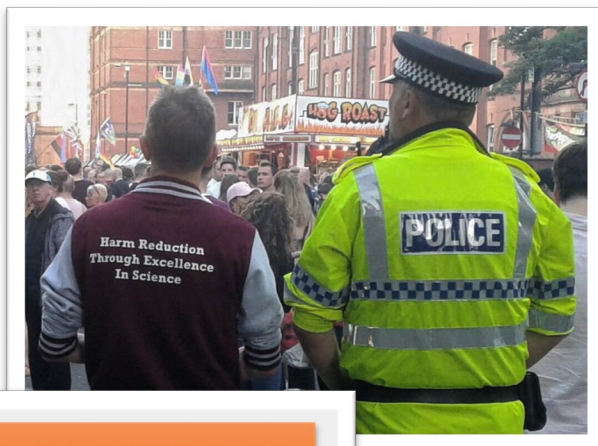
Ryan Mewis
Deputy Director



LICENSED TESTING LAB



Our Focus – The Deathly Hallows



HARM REDUCTION

Substances
of Concern

Greater Manchester

GMTRENDS

Testing & Research for Emergent & New Drugs System



INTELLIGENCE



INNOVATIVE ANALYSIS



Harm Reduction – Informing People

Greater Manchester Drug Early Warning System 18.01.2019

WARNING

Dangerous pills in circulation in Greater Manchester

Three young people from Bury are in a serious condition in hospital after taking pills they thought were ecstasy (MDMA)

Dangerous pills sold as MDMA (ecstasy)

The pills are described as badly made and crumbly and were believed to have been 'home made'. They are beige in colour and stamped with the UPS logo. They are described as smelling of vomit.



The pills contained an extremely high dose of: **Alpha-PVP**
Alpha-PVP is an hallucinogenic stimulant drug. The dose present in the pills was up to 8 times higher than what is normally considered a strong dose of Alpha-PVP.

- The three young people experienced a severe adverse reaction that lasted 20 hours. Symptoms included psychosis, distress; severe paranoia. They are still in a serious condition in hospital.
- Alpha-PVP may cause racing heart rate, agitation, high blood pressure, hallucinations and delirium. Alpha-PVP may be fatal especially in combination with other drugs.

- These pills contain extremely dangerous doses of Alpha-PVP.
- DO NOT TAKE THEM.
- If you have any please dispose of them down the toilet.
- In case of any concerns or emergency ring for an ambulance

Sacha Lord  [@Sacha_Lord](#)

WARNING: Last night, scientists [@ManMetUni](#) tested these tablets that are currently in circulation. They have an extremely high dosage, more than 250mg. If you have taken them and feel unwell, please seek medical attention [#Mandrake](#) [#GreaterManchester](#) [#SavingLives](#) [#LeadingTheWay](#)



6:55 PM · Oct 27, 2019

202 163 people are Tweeting about this

Greater Manchester Drug Early Warning System. 18th December 2019


WARNING

Synthetic cannabinoids ('Spice') mis-sold as 'THC vape'/'cannabis oil'/'THC vape pens'.

The Greater Manchester Drug Alert Panel issued a public warning in July 2019 concerning mis-sold 'THC vapes'. After further incidents in schools and amongst school age children in the **Bury, Rochdale and Oldham** area the warning is being updated. The incidents have involved substances that were sold as either 'THC vape'/'THC vape pens'/'THC oil' or 'cannabis oil'. The reports usually indicate the substance was vaped in an electronic-cigarette device.

Some of these incidents have led to pupils collapsing and to ambulances being called.

A number of samples involved in these incidents have recently been tested and found to contain **synthetic cannabinoids**. These are the laboratory made chemicals found in 'Spice'. It is **extremely dangerous** for a young person with no tolerance to inhale **even a single dose** of a potent synthetic cannabinoid.



Samples containing a clear or coloured e-liquid which tests showed contained a synthetic cannabinoid ('Spice'). None of these samples contained THC or CBD.

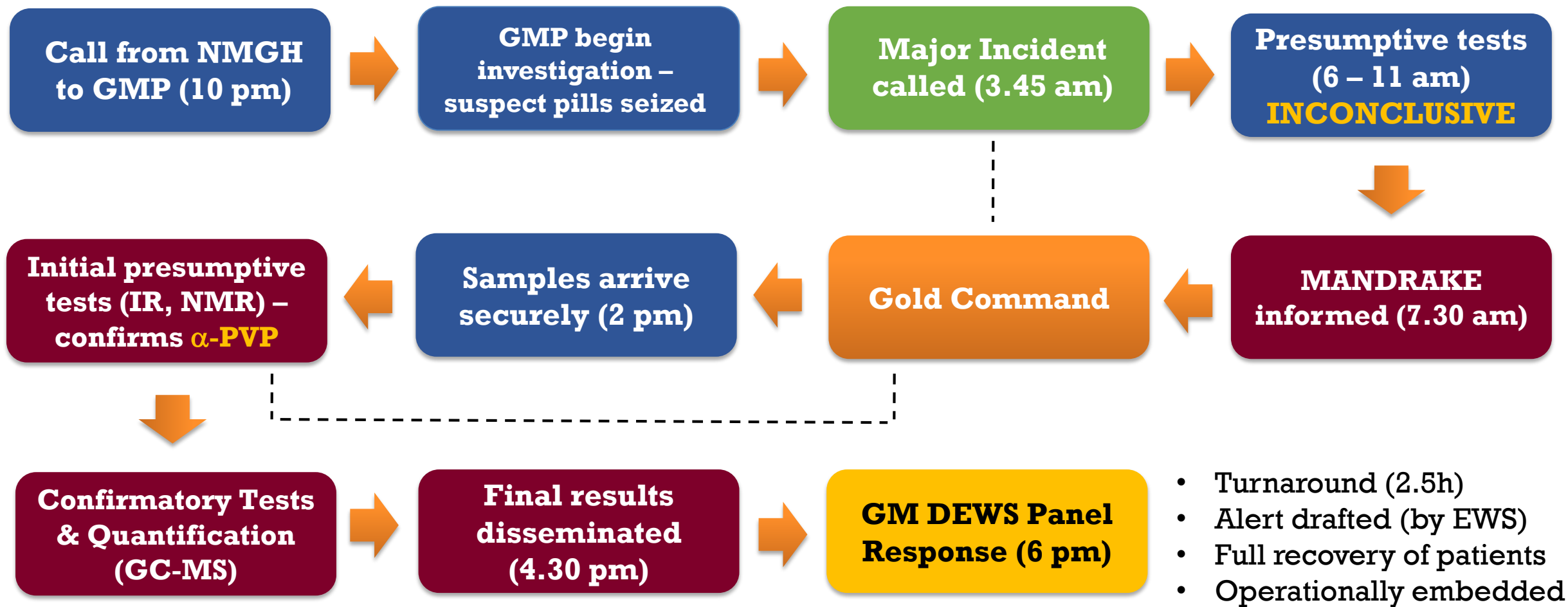
THC is a chemical found in the cannabis plant and the main chemical responsible for the cannabis 'high'. When tested these samples did not contain THC, nor any other chemicals found in cannabis. These samples contained commercially produced flavoured e-liquid into which varying amounts of a synthetic cannabinoid had been added. Synthetic cannabinoids are the laboratory-made chemicals found in 'Spice'.

The liquids tested have varied in colour and the smell appears to be from the commercial e-liquid used. It is unknown how widespread the mis-selling of 'THC/Cannabis vape liquid' containing a synthetic cannabinoid is. Tests conducted on samples sent into WEDINOS, the Welsh drug testing system, sold as 'Cannabis vape juice' or 'THC Liquid' have also contained a synthetic cannabinoid.

- Publically-funded & embedded into the forensic process. **First resource of its type, in England.**
- Rapid, robust and reliable chemical analysis in **permanent**, licensed city-centre facility.

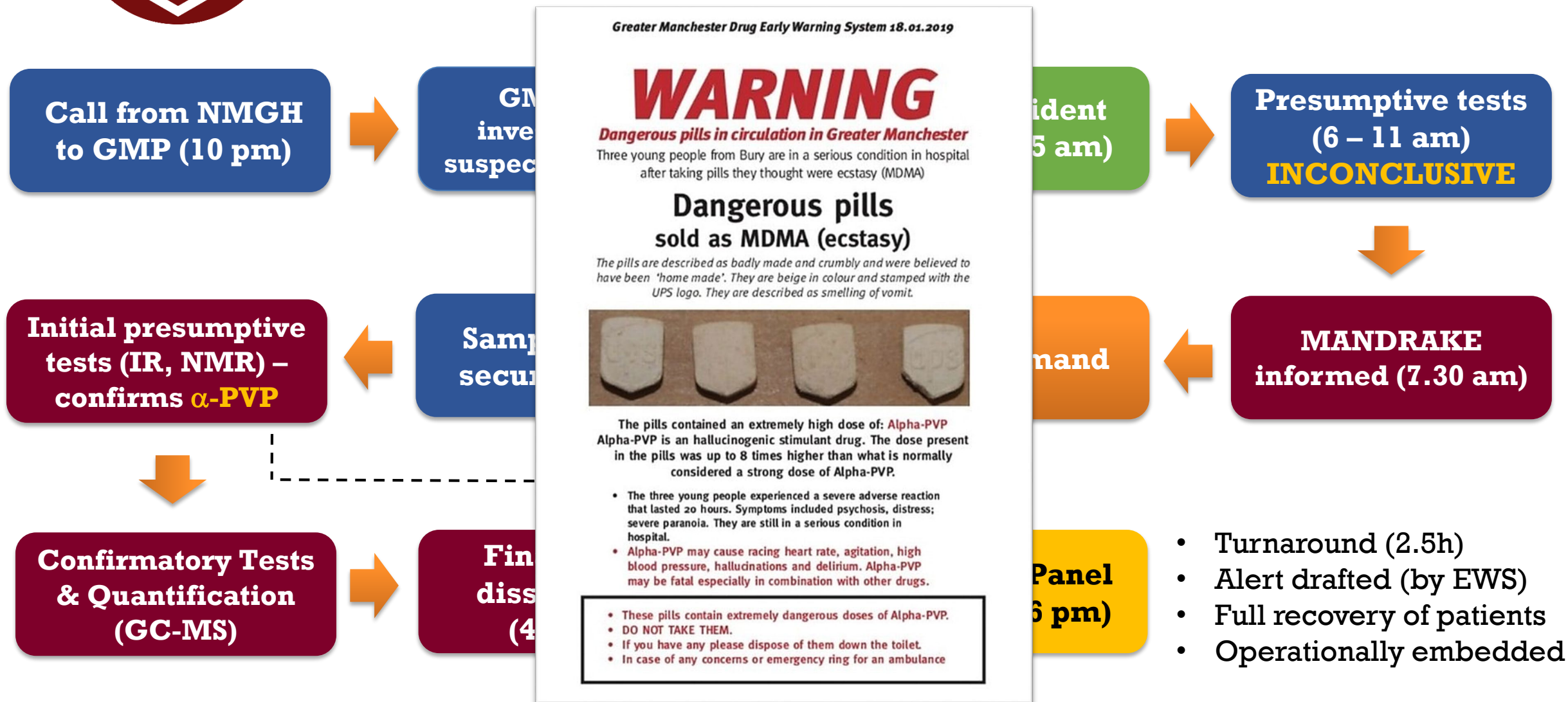


Case Study – The Bury Incident (17th – 18th Jan 2019)



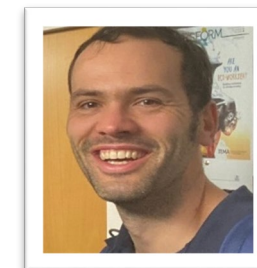


Case Study – The Bury Incident (17th – 18th Jan 2019)





Innovative Analysis – Informing Practice



- **Qualitative Analysis (5 min)**^{1,2}
- Simple, robust and widely applicable.
- Field trials (GMP, HMP Holme House, Pride)
- **Quantitative Analysis (MDMA, 2.5 min)**³
- Deployed at Warehouse Project (2019)

¹ Antonides et al, *ACS Omega* (2019), **4**, 7103

² WO2019138226 Patent (2019)

³ Hussain et al, *Forensic Chem.* (2020), **20**, 100263



Innovative Analysis – Informing Practice



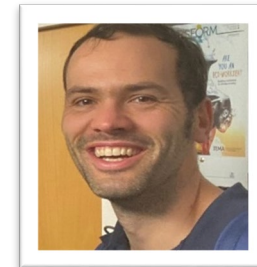
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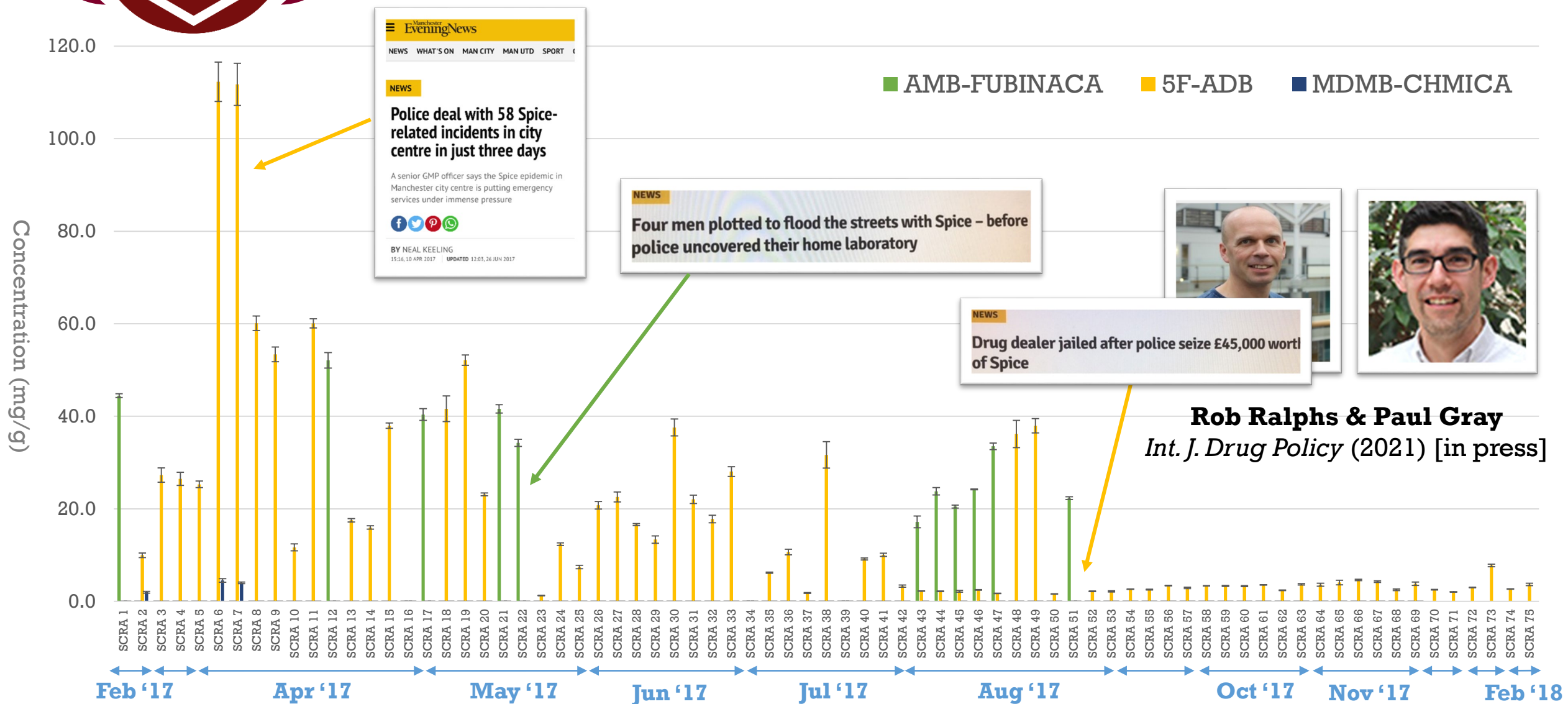
al, *ACS Omega* (2019), **4**, 7103

226 Patent (2019)

, *Forensic Chem.* (2020), **20**, 100263



Intelligence – Informing Policy





Intelligence – Informing Professionals

Spice Warning

March 2017.

Information about recent incidents involving 'Spice' in Manchester

Spice in Manchester

- Spice is a nickname for a herbal smoking mixture containing one or more of a group of drugs called synthetic cannabinoids.
- There are hundreds of different synthetic cannabinoids, some are more potent, more toxic and more dangerous than others.
- Two samples of Spice from Manchester City Centre have been tested. Both contained a synthetic cannabinoid called AMB FUBINACA.

AMB FUBINACA is very potent and very toxic drug. It caused a 'zombie like' condition and led to 33 overdoses in one area of the United States in 2016.

Don't start using Spice: 8 people died last year after smoking
There is no safe way of using this addictive and extremely dangerous drug. However, if you are using the following advice may reduce the risk.

Harm reduction advice

- Sit down before you smoke Spice as you may lose your balance, fall over or pass out.
- Spice is potent even at very low doses.
- Don't smoke Spice neat, always mix with tobacco.
- Start any new batch with a tiny match head size test dose.

Help available in Manchester

- There are various treatments for Spice users including medically assisted withdrawal.

For over 18s, CGL,
43A Carnarvon Street,
Telephone 0161 214 0770.

For young people (under 18)
Eclipse, 102 Oldham Street,
Telephone 0161 839 2054.

Greater Manchester Drug Early Warning System 29. June 2017

WARNING

Press reports of dangerous drugs in Oldham and Rochdale

These are now thought to be separate incidents. The drug related death is thought to involve heroin. The hospital admissions are now thought to involve drugs sold as crystals of MDMA, but were in fact crystals of Synthetic cannabinoids.

Synthetic cannabinoids

Greater Manchester Drug Early Warning System. 18th December 2019

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What's next ???

dangerous and likely to result in harm or death

The crystals can vary in size and colour and may be crushed and may appear as a powder. It may not be possible to differentiate between them and other forms of crystallised or powdered drugs.

Herbal forms of synthetic cannabinoids are active at tiny match head sized doses. Starting with a tiny test dose is good advice for using crystal MDMA, but a test dose of crystal synthetic cannabinoids may still be a potent enough dose to make you seriously ill.

and Synthetic cannabinoid may still make you seriously ill

Following symptoms were reported soon after the drug was taken:

- manic behaviour
- rigid muscles
- fast racing pulse

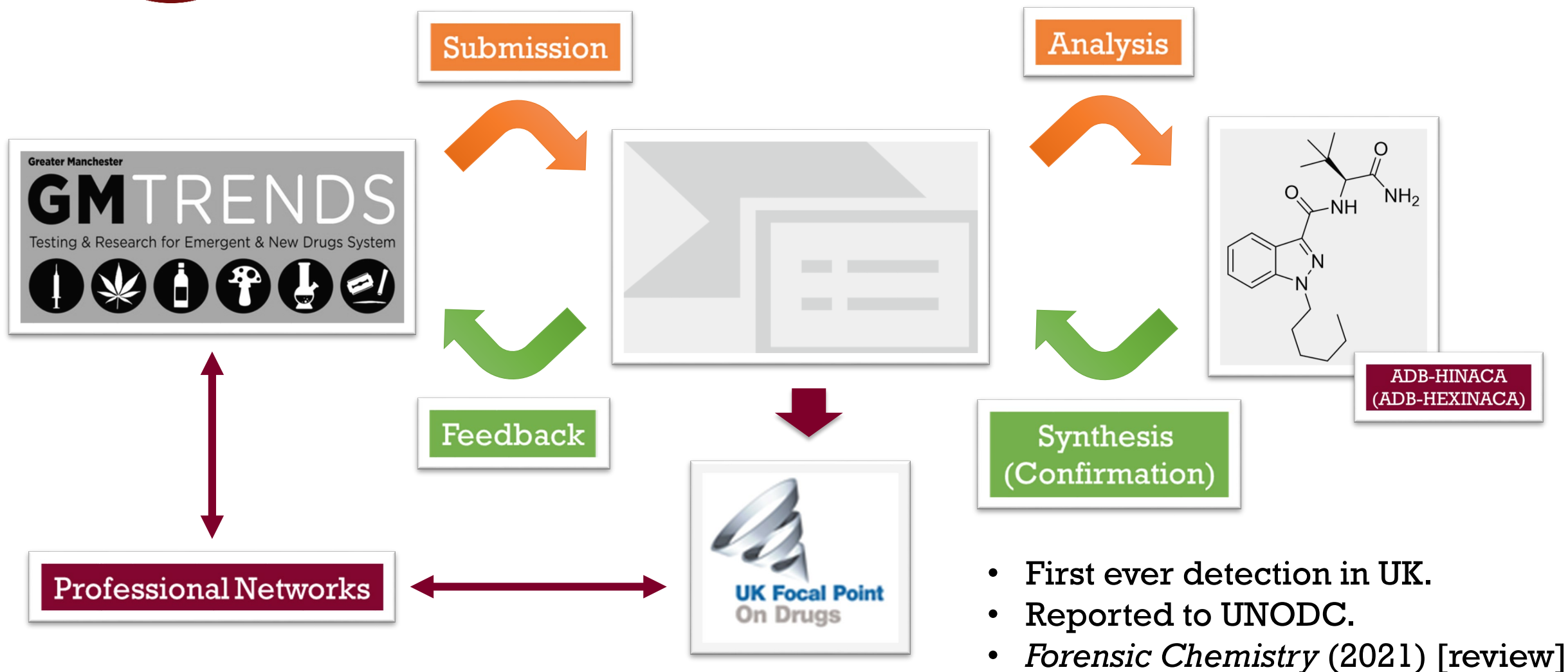
likely to prove fatal if no medical intervention

once if similar symptoms occur after taking drugs





Case Study – ADB-HINACA (23rd Mar 2021)





Our Impact

POLICING

Monitoring of local, national and international drug trends.

Emerging threats – fentanyl and ADB-HINACA.

New forensic pathway incorporating MANDRAKE's ability to test.

Drugs Early Warning System (GM Police & Crime Plan 2018).

POLICY

Inform other public services & partner agencies.

Develop Police, GMCA and research initiatives.

Work with night time economy.

Share best working practice with others - **OpenScience**

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The End of the Beginning...



...BUT IT IS A MANCHESTER-LED SOLUTION!

